Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission
Conseil de la radiodiffusion et des télécommunications canadiennes
Canada

News Release

June 14, 1995

CRTC OUTLINES PROPOSAL FOR THE INTRODUCTION OF DIGITAL RADIO

OTTAWA/HULL -- The CRTC today outlined its general plans for the introduction of digital radio broadcasting in Canada. It also called for public comment on a proposal for licensing, on an experimental basis, digital radio services that meet specific criteria (Public Notice CRTC 1995-95).

"Momentum towards the introduction of digital radio has been building for the past few years, and Canadian broadcasters have been at the forefront in the development and testing of this new technology," said CRTC Chairman Keith Spicer. "Valuable work has already been undertaken by the government's Task Force on the Introduction of Digital Radio in collaboration with public and private broadcasters. Now the time has come to open the door to experimental services which will provide the detailed information needed to establish the long-term policy and regulatory framework for digital radio broadcasting in Canada."

"The Commission is proposing a two-stage approach designed to ensure a timely and orderly transition from conventional to digital radio," Mr. Spicer explained. "This approach would allow Canadian radio broadcasters to retain their technological lead while contributing to the development of a well-thought-out strategy for the full-fledged introduction of digital radio, one that would benefit both the industry and the Canadian public in the long term."

Digital radio broadcasting refers to the over-the-air transmission and reception of radio signals using digital technology. This technology makes possible the reproduction of sound that rivals the quality of compact disks. It has the potential of providing higher quality broadcasting services to the public, as well as non-programming services, such as paging and datacasting, using ancillary capacity.

The Commission considers that digital radio should be a replacement for conventional AM and FM radio services. It also considers that existing radio services should have priority access, but not exclusive access, to the digital band.

The first stage of the Commission's proposal involves granting a new 'experimental digital radio licence' to each existing AM and FM licensee that wishes to simulcast its programming using digital technology. Such a licence would generally be issued for a term of three years. Applications from other undertakings would be considered on a case-by-case basis, according to the well-established radio market criteria.

Today's public notice sets out a number of terms and conditions to which experimental digital radio licences would be subject. These terms and conditions are designed to provide licensees with sufficient flexibility to experiment with different kinds of arrangements while ensuring that experimental digital radio services do not have an undue impact on competition in the radio industry in the short term.

During a second stage, the Commission intends to conduct a broad public consultation process to resolve a number of complex, long-term issues relating

to the development of the technology and the structure of the radio industry. These issues relate to the introduction of new services; technical standards and questions; coverage areas; ownership of transmitter facilities; and regulations. For example, what would be an appropriate time frame for the conversion to digital technology? To what extent should stations be allowed to expand from their current coverage areas? How should digital transmitter facilities be shared, and who should be permitted to own them?

The Commission invites comments on its proposed approach to the introduction of digital radio and, in particular, on the specific terms and conditions to govern experimental digital radio services. Written comments must be submitted to the CRTC Secretary General, Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0N2 (fax: 819-994-0218) no later than July 17, 1995. All submissions will form part of the public record of the proceeding and, therefore, will be available for consultation at any of the CRTC offices.

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Contact: CRTC Public Affairs, Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 0N2
Tel: 819-997-0313, TDD: 819-994-0423, Fax: 819-994-0218

Copies of today's notice are available through our Internet home page -- http://www.crtc.gc.ca -- or the public examination room at any of the following CRTC offices:

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